



**Testimony to the Michigan State House Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
Committee
January 29, 2018**

**Presented by Melinda Anderson, Director of Engagement
Detroit Creative Corridor Center**

Introduction

Detroit Creative Corridor Center (DC3) is an economic development organization at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit that was established through a partnership with Business Leaders of Michigan in 2010. Originally founded as a business accelerator, our mission is to grow creative density in Detroit to aid its revitalization. We have evolved over the last 8 years and offer a variety of programs and services for design businesses. While we serve businesses across Southeast Michigan, our mission is to concentrate the impact in the city of Detroit.

Specifically we offer a variety of business counseling, education and support to help design businesses grow and develop, work on a variety of ways to generate demand for their services, and promote Detroit design locally, nationally and globally. We are known as a hub for information and resources for and about Detroit's design community and produce popular monthly networking events that draw 300-400 people. Since 2011, we have put on the Detroit Design Festival, an annual celebration of design and creativity. This last year we estimate almost 40,000 people attended the festival.

Detroit City of Design and the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

In 2015, we applied for a UNESCO City of Design designation on behalf of the City of Detroit. This designation is both a recognition of our city's design legacy, as well as an opportunity to use design to drive sustainable and equitable development in Detroit. The designation is conferred by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network covers the seven creative fields of Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music and today spans 180 cities in 72 countries. Cities in the network place creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their city's development plans, develop public-private partnerships that also involve civil



society, and commit to sharing their best practices across the network to help each other. The Network offers unparalleled opportunities for cities to draw on peer learning processes and collaborative projects in order to fully capitalize on their creative assets and advance their agenda.

This common agenda includes:

- strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
- improve access to and participation in cultural life, in particular for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals;
- fully integrate culture and creativity into sustainable development plans.

Across the Network, member cities have experimented with a variety of approaches to advance this agenda. These approaches include event strategies, competitions and awards, policy initiatives, economic development and exposure programs, projects for the built environment, research, exchanges and networking.

In December 2015, Detroit became the first and only US city to receive the UNESCO City of designation, a ten-year honor. Detroit received the designation not only because of its long legacy in design, but also because of current trends in Detroit design. The legacy dates back to Henry Ford's assembly line and Harley Earl's studio at General Motors, and includes many disciplines from mid-century modern and the tremendous legacy at Cranbrook to the many ways Detroit influenced urban design. Today, Detroit has a rich tradition of community-driven design, from local maker culture to neighborhood interventions.

Since being designated, DC3 has been working to leverage the designation on behalf of Detroit's revitalization. Although there are no resources associated with the designation, we've received some generous support from local foundations, Michigan Council on Arts and Cultural Affairs, and corporate sponsors to support learning and exchange with other UNESCO Cities of Design, expand our local efforts to promote design to the community, and to develop a 10-year vision and strategy for the designation.



DC3 has already benefited from participation in the Network through learning and exchange with several cities, including Montreal, Canada; Saint-Etienne, France; Graz, Austria; Dundee, Scotland, Puebla, Mexico, Nagoya, Japan, and Shenzhen, China. Since receiving the designation, over 100 Detroiters have travelled abroad to share their work. In fact, Detroit was the featured Guest City of Honor at the Saint-Etienne International Design Biennale in March 2017 in Saint-Etienne, France. Three different exhibitions from Detroit were showcased on the theme of the changing future of work. Two hundred forty thousand people attended the biennale. We have also hosted representatives from a dozen cities over the last two years in Detroit.

The designation has brought media attention to Detroit. For full year 2017, DC3 secured press coverage in more than 100 outlets, reaching a potential audience of nearly 95M. This designation has peaked the interest of national media to cover stories on Detroit design. This year, Detroit was number nine on the New York Times [52 Places to Go in 2017](#). Additionally, stories like [New Exhibition Shows Detroit's Design Power](#) in Architectural Digest highlight what is happening and make the case for Detroit as a design destination.

Finally, the designation has supported our main goal of growing jobs, investment and revenues of Detroit design businesses for three reasons:

- It creates a broader call to action encompassing government, business, community and academia around the design's value to Detroit's revitalization.
- It helps focus and define the narrative about Detroit design so that more people can understand it and repeat it over time.
- It gives Detroit a global platform, expanding the opportunities for its design community and bringing a different level of attention to the city.

We're very excited for 2018, now that we have completed a comprehensive process to create a long-term vision for the role of design in Detroit's revitalization, values for the initiative, and strategies to achieve that vision. Over 1000 people were involved in helping to shape this plan which we will be sharing in detail in April 2018. We hope that you will continue to stay interested in the coming months.



Detroit Design Festival

Much like the UNESCO City of Design designation, the Detroit Design Festival is an important vehicle for increasing public awareness about design and generating enthusiasm and excitement. The Detroit Design Festival is a 5 day citywide celebration of design and creativity that attracts more than 40,000 attendees every year. Detroit Design Festival programming and events explore the various ways design is shaping the way we live and work. From the workplace to the built environment, thoughtful design can impact and even change the way we experience the world around us.

The Detroit Design Festival also shows how design in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and the products and services we use everyday can impact the way society functions and the way people experience the world around them. If we focus on using a design-based approach to solve some of Detroit's most pressing issues today, the possibility for Detroit's residence to live in a sustainable and equitable future are endless.